CDC Vital Signs Prescription Painkiller Overdoses in the U.S. – What You Need to Know

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overdose deaths from prescription painkillers have skyrocketed in the past decade. Every year, nearly 15,000 people die from these overdoses—more than those who die from heroin and cocaine combined.

Although painkillers are prescribed for a medical purpose, many end up in the hands of people who misuse or abuse them. In 2010, one in every 20 people in the U.S. age 12 and older reported using these drugs non-medically in the past year. This means using drugs without a prescription, or just for the "high" they cause.

Here are the steps you can take to prevent an overdose:

- Use prescription painkillers only as directed.
- Don't sell or share your prescription painkillers with others.
- Always store them in a secure place.
- And dispose of them properly.

And if you or someone you care about has a substance abuse problem, get help. Call 1-800-662-HELP.

To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.